



Representative Louise M. Slaughter
Chairwoman, House Committee on Rules
Representing New York's 28th District

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Rep. Slaughter Pushes For Federal Aid For NY Farmers

Thirteen Members of NY Congressional Delegation Urge USDA To Help Farmers Whose Crops Were Damaged By June Thunderstorms

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today urged U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer to grant Governor David Paterson's request to issue natural disaster designations for the New York Rep. Slaughter's letter to Secretary Schafer was signed by an additional twelve members of the New York Congressional Delegation who represent the affected counties. counties that suffered crop damage as a result of last month's thunderstorms.

“New York’s farmers have been hit hard by Mother Nature,” said Rep. Slaughter. “The crop damage caused by these hail and thunderstorms has threatened this year’s harvest as well as our regional economies. Our hard-working farmers deserve federal assistance and I have joined with my colleagues to make sure that they receive it as quickly as possible.”

On June 16, 2008, major hail and thunderstorms travelled through a number of counties in New York State causing severe damage to a variety of crops including apples, pears, peaches, cherries, grapes, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, lettuce, corn, beans, squash, and onions.

On June 26, 2008, Governor Paterson formally requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issue a natural disaster designation for the affected counties. Once the counties are designated as natural disasters, farmers within the county can be considered for low-interest emergency loans from the USDA Farm Service office.

BACKGROUND

The full text of Rep. Slaughter’s letter can be found below:

July 10, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer

Secretary of Agriculture

United States Department of Agriculture

Room 200A, Administration Building

12th Street and Jefferson Drive SW

Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Shafer:

Farmers across New York State are struggling to cope with the disastrous effects of hail and thunderstorms which swept across the state on June 16, 2008. As Members of Congress representing the affected areas, we ask you to support Governor David Paterson's request to issue a natural disaster designation for the following twenty-four counties:

1. Albany

2. Cattaraugus

3. Cayuga

4. Columbia

5. Dutchess

6. Erie

7. Fulton

8. Genesee

9. Greene

10. Monroe

11. Niagara

12. Onondaga

13. Ontario

14. Orange

15. Orleans

16. Putnam

17. Rensselaer

18. Rockland

19. Schoharie

20. Schuyler

21. Seneca

22. Ulster

23. Wayne

24. Westchester

Many of our constituents have shared their stories recounting golf-ball sized hail, high winds, and severe lightning that have destroyed thousands of acres of their crops. Our districts are dependent on agriculture to sustain and grow our economies. In fact, New York State has 7.6 million acres of farmland with 35,000 farms producing a variety of crops. These farms generated \$3.6 billion for the State in 2006. The June 16th storms have threatened our farmers' livelihoods, and thus endangered New York's economy, which is so closely tied with agricultural production.

Please support Governor Paterson's request to issue a natural disaster designation for these counties. We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28)

Rep. Eliot L. Engel (NY-17)

Rep. Nita M. Lowey (NY-18)

Rep. John J. Hall (NY-19)

Rep. Kirsten E. Gillibrand (NY-20)

Rep. Michael R. McNulty (NY-21)

Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey (NY-22)

Rep. John M. McHugh (NY-23)

Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)

Rep. James T. Walsh (NY-25)

Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds (NY-26)

Rep. Brian Higgins (NY-27)

Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl (NY-29)

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